



How Colleges Benefit by Serving Students with Intellectual Disabilities

Many school systems are interested in providing older students with intellectual disabilities with access to college learning environments for their final years of public school. This fact sheet provides a list of the various benefits that can be reaped by the college faculty, staff, and students when such collaboration occurs.

Community Involvement & Diversity

Many colleges and universities have community outreach and/or management goals funds. This is especially true of community college systems. As a result, they are required to show they are making an effort to diversify their population and to collaborate with community organizations in their area. By partnering with a local school system to serve students with intellectual disabilities colleges are able to serve an under-represented group and demonstrate a commitment to serving non-traditional students.

Local and National Public Relations

Colleges who provide programs or services to students with intellectual disabilities are receiving recognition in state and national press as exemplary service delivery systems. This positive public attention may assist colleges and universities with program accreditation, acquiring local grants, and more.

Enhancing Accreditation Reviews

Many colleges must comply with national standard to remain accredited. For example, some colleges with teacher education programs are reviewed by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). Colleges that have developed programs or services for students with intellectual disabilities by collaborating with local schools systems have found that their NCATE reviews reflected this practice positively. In addition, many state discretionary funds are earmarked for collaborative programs and could be accessed to further support student's activities.

Research Opportunities

College faculty has the opportunity to partner with local school system program personnel to investigate the efficacy and outcomes of a new model of special education service delivery. Research could be conducted on educational materials, supports, and student outcomes. A wide array of both qualitative and quantitative research questions could be addressed within such programs, serving both the educational and research communities.

Expertise

By collaborating with school system personnel, the college the college/university staff members now have access to new professionals with added expertise. The school system staff may include individuals with a vast knowledge in special education, adapting learning styles, disabilities in general, diversity issues, education and employment laws, on-the-job accommodations, curriculum adaptation, and many more topics. These instructors could provide support or consult with professors or college departments.

Enrollment Dollars

Institutions receive enrollment dollars for the number of students participating in classes. An increase in student population means an increase in bottom line funding. Students pay to audit courses, and in some cases will be taking classes for credit, both options provide a fiscal advantage for the institution.

Increased ability to meet the needs of diverse learners.

College instructors must meet the needs of a wide array of nontraditional students, those for whom English is their second language, students with learning or sensory impairments. Often the accommodations provided to students with intellectual disabilities have the unexpected result of benefiting the class population as a whole.

Student Benefits

The college student population benefits from the college serving students with intellectual disabilities in a variety of ways. College students who are interested in pursuing careers in psychology, physical therapy, nursing, special education, or other social sciences may be able to serve as peer mentors or volunteer to tutor students. Students who are interested in working in social science or education may have the opportunity to work with students to gain practicum experiences or to address student service learning requirements. Student will also be provided with social opportunities to interact with members of their community who are different from them, just as they get to meet and get to know individuals from different cultures, races, and religions.